Course report 2025

National 5 Graphic Communication

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative, and to promote better understanding. You should read the report with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2025 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 5,177

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 5,266

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	1,701	32.3	32.3	89
B	1,338	25.4	57.7	77
C	1,001	19.0	76.7	65
D	701	13.3	90.0	53
No award	525	10.0	100%	Not applicable

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

- ‘most’ means greater than or equal to 70%
- ‘many’ means 50% to 69%
- ‘some’ means 25% to 49%
- ‘a few’ means less than 25%

You can find statistical reports on the statistics and information page of our website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper generally performed as expected however a few questions proved to be less demanding than anticipated, for example questions 3(c)(i) 3(f)(ii), 4(e)(ii) and 4(g). We adjusted the grade boundaries to take account of this.

Assignment

The assignment generally performed as expected this year.

We re-introduced thumbnails in task 2, however they were less demanding than expected for candidates. We adjusted the grade boundaries to take account of this.

Candidate performance has improved from previous years across most aspects of the assignment.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Question 1(a) Many candidates described how the graphic designer created contrast and unity in the given graphic, referring to two or more elements in each response. For alignment, some candidates correctly described the type of alignment and relationship between two or more elements.

Question 1(b) Nearly all candidates attempted this question. Many candidates correctly described one way dominance was created in the given graphic.

Question 1(c) Most candidates described advantages of publishing online rather than physically printing. The most common correct responses included ‘reaching a wider audience’, ‘easier to edit’ and ‘website can be accessed anywhere’.

Question 1(d) Most candidates correctly identified two correct pictorial views.

Question 1(e) Nearly all candidates attempted this question. Many candidates correctly calculated the measurements from the packaging and applied a scale of 1:5.

Question 1(f) Most candidates identified the moon shaped cut out on the surface development. Many candidates identified the text on the surface development.

Question 1(g) Most candidates correctly described two ways the environmental impact of the packaging could be reduced.

Question 2(a) Nearly all candidates attempted this question. Many candidates correctly stated ‘isometric’.

Question 2(b) Most candidates described two examples of poor practice in the exploded pictorial drawing.

Question 2(c) Many candidates described how to model the component using 3D CAD software. Many candidates correctly described the extrusion of circles and hexagon to the correct sizes. Many candidates described the 4x45 chamfer in the correct position.

Question 2(d) Most candidates attempted this question. The orthographic drawing contained more than six errors to allow the question to be more accessible to candidates. Most candidates were able to identify three errors in the drawing, while some candidates were able to identify four to six errors.

Question 2(e) Nearly all candidates attempted this question. Most candidates correctly calculated the missing dimensions from the orthographic drawing.

Question 3(a) Most candidates correctly stated the graphic as being a promotional graphic and provided one reason why this graphic was used.

Question 3(b) Many candidates correctly stated, ‘the scale for a floor plan’.

Question 3(c)(i) Most candidates correctly stated ‘door’.

Question 3(c)(iii) Some candidates correctly stated ‘WC’.

Question 3(c)(iv) Many candidates correctly stated ‘lamp’.

Question 3(c)(v) Many candidates correctly stated ‘socket’.

Question 3(d) Some candidates correctly described the advantages of a CAD library, for example, ‘no need to re-draw or re-make components’, ‘speeds up production and improves accuracy’.

Question 3(e)	Some candidates correctly described advantages of remote working. Common correct responses included ‘reduction in travel time and costs’ and ‘ability to choose where to work’.
Question 3(f)	Most candidates correctly identified the correct plan and pictorial view.
Question 4(a)(i)	Many candidates correctly explained advantages of thumbnails. Some common correct responses included ‘ideas can be created quickly’, ‘a range of ideas can be produced’ and ‘ideas can be shared with the client’.
Question 4(a)(ii)	Most candidates correctly described a benefit of including annotations in thumbnail sketches.
Question 4(b)	Most candidates correctly stated the names of two input devices.
Question 4(c)	Most candidates correctly identified where the DTP techniques were used in the given graphic.
Question 4(d)	Most candidates described how to create a tint of a colour. Some candidates explained why the colours were suitable.
Question 4(e)	Many candidates stated ‘crop’ or ‘cropping tool’. Most candidates explained why the background was removed from the image.
Question 4(f)	Many candidates correctly stated ‘reverse’ or ‘reverse text’.
Question 4(g)	Most candidates correctly explained why a sans serif font was used in the magazine layout.
Question 5(a)	Some candidates stated two CAD rendering techniques.
Question 5(b)(i)	Most candidates correctly stated ‘rectangle’ or ‘line’.
Question 5(b)(ii)	Some candidates correctly stated ‘arc’.
Question 5(b)(iii)	Many candidates correctly stated ‘trim’.

Question 5(c) Most candidates correctly stated ‘revolve’ and ‘shell’. Many candidates stated extrude, subtract.

Question 5(d) Many candidates correctly described most or all of the modelling process for the component.

Question 5(e) Some candidates correctly described how to fully assemble the components.

Assignment

Task 1

1(a) Most candidates were able to successfully 3D CAD model the components and orientate them correctly. Candidate performance in this area has improved from previous years. Most candidates were able to correctly CAD model the components.

1(b) Most candidates orientated the views correctly and created sectional views with the cutting plane being in the correct position.

1(c) Most candidates produced this view to the correct orientation and with the correct spacing and alignment.

1(d) Most candidates produced their drawings using third angle projection and included a suitable title block. Most candidates correctly applied centre lines to their component orthographic views. The application of centre lines through tasks 1(a) and 1(b) has improved from previous years. We signposted candidates to do this through an instruction in the assignment task this year.

Task 2

2(a) Most candidates produced a CAD rendered pictorial illustration of the microphone using the correct materials.

2(b)	Most candidates produced thumbnails that contained the required information and were clear.
2(c)	Most candidates produced the DTP layout to the correct dimensions.
2(c)	Most candidates were able to correctly identify their use of reverse text.
2(c)	Most candidates included an image from the data sheets, extended text, the company name and the logo.
2(c)	Most candidates correctly identified their use of the design elements and principles. A few candidates provided full explanations of the effect they had on the layout. This was not required for the assignment task.

Task 3

3(a)	Sketching of the three component orthographic parts has improved on previous years. Many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of interpreting a pictorial view as orthographic views.
3(a)	Many candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the application of third angle projection.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Question 2(a)	For those candidates who did not achieve the mark, most incorrectly stated ‘oblique’ or ‘perspective’.
Question 4(c)	A few candidates mixed up flow text along a path and text wrap. Some candidates confused column and gutter.
Question 5(a)	Common incorrect responses included ‘colour’, ‘highlights’ and ‘shadows’.
Question 5(d)	Common errors where candidates did not achieve marks came from the order of the modelling process (applying the shell at the end of the process would not work), or by stating the incorrect internal fillet size.

Assignment

Task 1

1(b)	Many candidates did not assemble the components correctly.
1(d)	Many candidates did not display dimensions following British Standards. Broken extension lines was a common theme. Overlapping dimensions were commonly applied. Some candidates did not label their drawing views or give each of the component drawings titles.

Task 2

2(c)	Most candidates did not produce a high or excellent quality DTP layout. The quality of DTP work requires improvement.

Task 3

3(a) Many candidates incorrectly applied hidden detail in their responses. Many candidates did not produce sketches to good proportions. These areas still require development.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Teachers and lecturers should continue to encourage candidates to use the correct terminology in 2D and 3D CAD questions. Although there has been a gradual improvement in candidates using the correct terminology, a few candidates in 2025 did not achieve marks due to using incorrect terms.

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates refer to two or more elements in a given graphic when responding to unity, alignment, contrast and depth questions. For example, ‘the green **background** and red **heading** create contrast in the layout.’ Generic responses will not achieve marks, for example ‘green and red create contrast.’

Candidate responses on the design principle of alignment should be detailed. Candidates must describe the type of alignment between two or more separate elements to achieve a mark, for example left-hand alignment or central alignment. Responses that referred to two elements being aligned but did not describe the type of alignment were quite common within candidate’s responses and did not achieve marks.

In preparing candidates for British Standards errors questions, teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to annotate the given orthographic drawing in the question. Although annotating is not compulsory, it is very useful to help candidates achieve marks rather than relying on written statements alone. Nearly all candidates who performed well in Q2(d) annotated the drawing to support their answer — some using a numbering system to clarify their responses.

Teachers and lecturers should also remind candidates to use blue or black ink for their responses, as instructed on the front page of the question paper. Since question papers are scanned as part of the marking process, responses written in pencil or highlighter pen may not be visible to markers.

Centres should ensure that candidates have access to the appendix in the National 5 Graphic Communication course specification, where British Standards symbols are shown (door, socket, lamp, etc).

Teachers and lecturers should continue to remind candidates that acceptable responses for 3D CAD rendering techniques include materials, textures and light source only at National 5. Some candidates incorrectly stated ‘highlights’ or ‘shadows’ being applied to the tealight diffuser — these are by-products of applying lighting or materials. Candidates need to understand the difference.

Assignment

Task 1

Teachers and lecturers should ensure their templates for producing the production graphics across task 1 are suitable and are set up correctly. While this was improved upon previous years submissions, centres should ensure they use a template with an appropriately sized title block that allows drawings to fit on the sheet.

When applying dimensions to the component parts, candidates must include enough dimensions to allow for manufacture. To identify whether they have included enough dimensions or not, candidates should use the data sheets for guidance. If there is a dimension shown on the data sheet, candidates should include this dimension on their production drawings.

Candidates should not manually override incorrect dimensions in their work to make models appear accurate. This is not good practice. If a candidate notices that they have not modelled a part correctly when they add dimensions, they should edit the part, not override the dimensions on the production drawings. A few candidates produced orthographic views in a scale too small for the detail of the drawings to be seen. Selecting a suitable scale for each component is part of the assessment criteria for applying British Standards. Candidates should produce their orthographic drawings to a suitable scale, large enough to show the detail in each view, and to enable them to clearly annotate all views.

Teachers and lecturers should spend time ensuring candidates know what is meant by correct orientation of views in task 1 of the assignment.

Teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates are prepared to use the three assembly techniques included in the National 5 Graphic Communication course specification, (centre axis, mate and align).

Most candidates are still finding it challenging to apply British Standards. Teachers and lecturers should develop candidate knowledge of the application of British Standards to drawings.

Candidates need to develop their application of dimensions to their drawings to British Standards. Many candidates are often producing drawings with overlapping dimensions or extension lines being broken. Teachers and lecturers should help candidates develop the skill of adding symbols and annotations to dimensions, specifically: diameter; radius; square; and chamfer.

Task 2

Centres must not provide templates for this task. Candidates are expected to demonstrate their understanding of producing a promotional graphic to stated dimensions.

Candidates should not spend time on areas which are not assessed or asked for in the assignment. Good practice for task 2 in this assignment is for candidates to write and/or type the name of the design element and/or principle in the area surrounding the DTP layout, then draw a line from it to clearly indicate the area or areas of the layout they identify.

In task 2(c), when identifying the use of colour, candidates must contextualise which use of colour they are identifying, for example, warm, cool, contrast, harmony, advancing, receding or the mood. We have provided this list to candidates in the assignment task to make this clear. Using the term ‘use of colour’ then pointing toward a colour is not a suitable response.

The quality of DTP work continues to be a weaker area of the assignment. Many candidates did not demonstrate an understanding of how to apply the design

elements and principles to a high quality in their layout. Teachers and lecturers should support candidates to creatively use the design elements and principles.

Task 3

Centres must not provide templates for this task.

Teachers and lecturers should remind candidates not to use drawing boards and equipment, as this approach will result in 0 marks being awarded across the task.

If candidates use digital sketching methods, centres must ensure that candidates do not use shape tools as this approach simulates using vector graphics. Similarly, candidates must not use software that creates 3D models and converts them to 2D sketches. This is because the assignment is assessing the skill of sketching.

Teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates are prepared to show the elevation of the component parts in the direction indicated on the data sheets.

Most candidates found the application of hidden detail in their orthographic sketching challenging. Teachers and lecturers should support candidates to understand how to apply hidden detail in orthographic sketches.

Candidates continue to find sketching in good proportions challenging. Some candidates sketched and rendered their pictorial sketches. These areas require further development.

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

Our main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and to maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, we aim to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject, at every level. Therefore, we hold a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of our Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. We can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy.